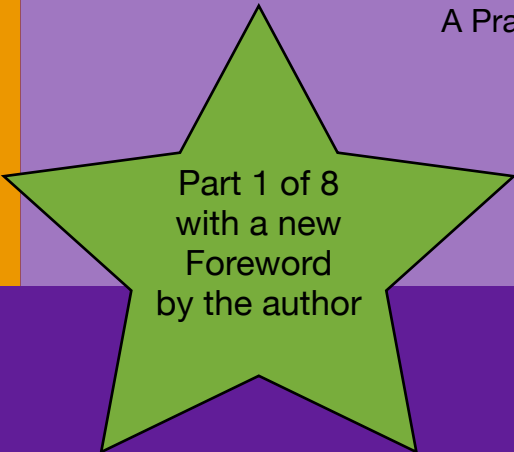


101 Ways To Market Your Language Program

A Practical Guide for Language Schools

Second Edition



Part 1 of 8
with a new
Foreword
by the author

Sarah Elaine Eaton, Ph.D

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In return, I'd appreciate if you'd return the favor by clicking here: www.draraheaton.wordpress.com and subscribe to my blog.

APA Citation info: Eaton, S.E. (2004). 101 Ways to Market Your Language Program: A Practical Guide for Language Schools, 2nd Edition (Ebook: Part 1 of 8). Retrieved from www.eatonintl.com

The complete version of this book, including all 8 parts, are available as a softcover book from my website (www.eatonintl.com) or from Amazon.com. Thanks for reading.

Other works authored by Sarah Elaine Eaton:



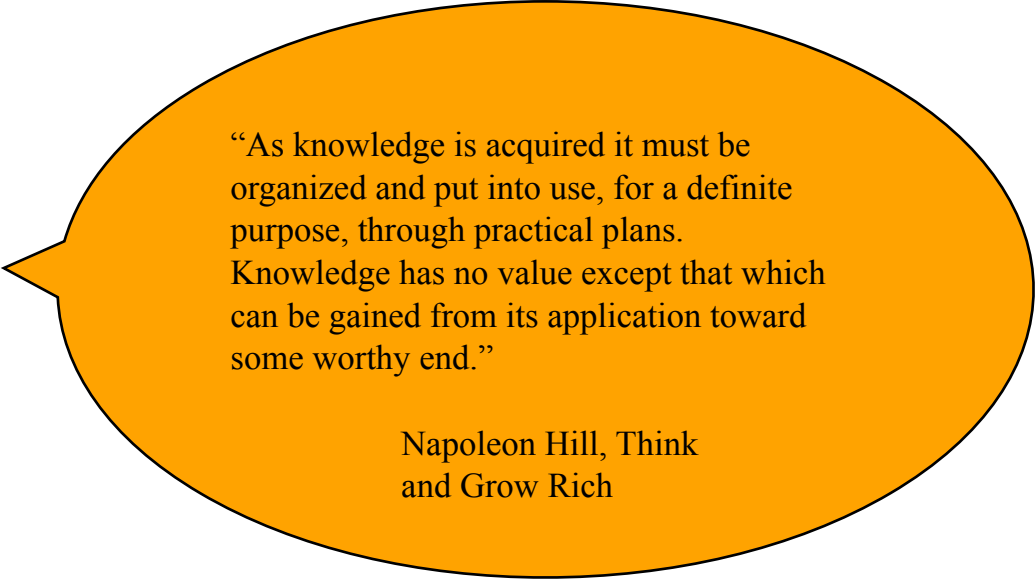
[Want to Change the World? Learn Another Language: Leadership Inspired by Language Learning](#)



[Formal, Non-formal and Informal Learning: The Case of Literacy, Essential Skills and Language Learning in Canada \(2010\)](#)



[Leadership Through Language Learning: The case of Gandhi](#)



“As knowledge is acquired it must be organized and put into use, for a definite purpose, through practical plans. Knowledge has no value except that which can be gained from its application toward some worthy end.”

Napoleon Hill, Think
and Grow Rich

Acknowledgements

I am pleased to share with you the second edition of 101 Ways to Market Your Language Program: A practical guide for language schools. My belief in the work that I do and dedication to it are a result of a strong personal and professional passion I have for the value of spreading the word about educational opportunities for students around the world.

I believe that when you discover your inner passion and gifts, you have a responsibility to use them. The first edition was the result of that passion, the joy my work brings me, and a desire to share it with more educators and administrators. The second edition was fueled even further by that passion. As my knowledge on the subject grows, I get excited about sharing it with others who have an interest in the field.

I wish to express gratitude to all those who contributed to the original edition, especially to Zoë Agashae at Crimson Ventures. It was not only the basis for the revised edition, it launched me into a whole new world. I've never had so much fun!

Without the help of some key people and companies, this second edition could never have been completed on time. We have changed and added many things, including Internet references and an expanded bibliography. My deepest appreciation to Loreto Doyle and her team at Group Enterprise Inc., to Gwen Gades at Blitzprint Inc., to Beth Fredeen, for keeping my financial books in order, and to Vivienne Rattray-Eaton, Alia Azim and Cindy Beare.

Personal and heartfelt thanks go to my family - Dad and Viv, Tracy and Bill, Aaron and Nicole, as well as Bryce, Marsha & Wesley, and all the folks “across the pond” in England, for ongoing support and encouragement.

In addition, I want to acknowledge the countless individuals, schools, companies and organizations who have offered ideas, references, feedback, information and encouragement.

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Foreword to the ebook

The first edition of this book was published in 2002. It ranked among DeMille's Technical Books Top 10 Best sellers, reaching #1 on that Top 10 list on August 25, 2003. "Technical books", in case you're a not familiar with the term, are non-fiction, how-to books that give practical advice to readers. My first book, and it became a best seller among technical books! It spent 5 weeks on that list. How thrilled was I?

In 2005, I updated it, adding in URLs and web page references. Back in those days, ebooks were less common. I was asking my readers to type out URLs found in the book. What a pain!

As I write this, it is 2010 and a lot has changed. I'm working on new books and materials, as we speak. In the meantime, I'm making this book available to you as a free ebook now. It will be published in parts, following the original printed version. I won't change any of the actual content from the 2nd printed edition, so if you find any links that don't work, please send me an e-mail at saraheaton2001@yahoo.ca or SarahEaton@eatonintl.com.

I love marketing language programs because I believe that the world really is a better place when we can reach out to one another in as many languages as possible. When we do, we improve global communication and enhance human understanding.

In 2009 I went to see His Holiness, the 14th Dalai Lama live and in person in Calgary. The overarching theme of the talk was “compassion is the new radicalism”. What better way to build compassion among humans and across borders than through language and improved communications?

Now go out there and market your language program so we can make the world a better place!

- Sarah

Preface

As government and institutional funding for language programs decreases, it becomes increasingly important for schools to spread the word about their courses in order to maintain enrollments and keep new students coming through the doors. This includes post-secondary institutions, private language schools, non-profit organizations and any other type of school offering language programs that people pay for. The problem is that most language program coordinators and managers have little experience or training in marketing. They juggle administrative (and sometimes even teaching) duties with student recruitment and program promotion. Most know that student enrollment is a priority, but making time and allocating resources for marketing their program take a backseat to more pressing needs. Some believe that business terms and ideas such as “marketing” have no place in education.

The problem is, the need to market and promote programs in order to keep enrollment flowing is a challenge that does not – and will not – go away. As Dr. Linda Vining points out, “Marketing concepts and practices are being applied at a rapid pace in schools. It is generally believed that as the role

matures, the profession and its functions will be more clearly defined, better accepted and more uniformly applied in schools.” (Marketing Matters in schools, p. 9) This book is designed to offer low-cost, easy tips and tricks that language program managers and coordinators can use (and delegate) to improve their school’s marketing efforts.

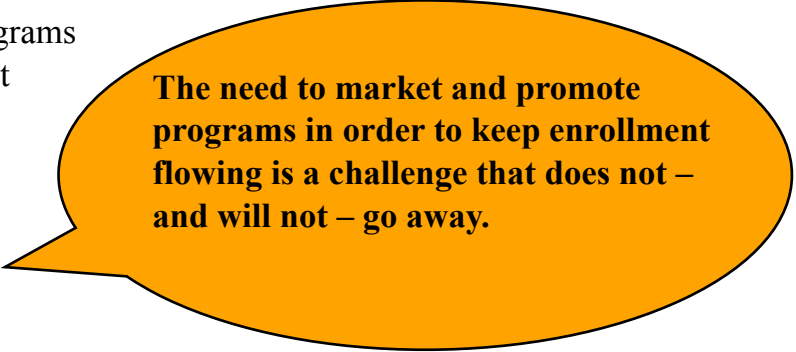
Finally, here’s important note about gender use in this book. We have chosen to use the masculine for some examples and the feminine for others. This is simply to add variety and avoid the cumbersome use of “he/she.” We have chosen the genders for our examples randomly and tried to use masculine and feminine equally throughout. As your student population and staff probably includes both genders, so do our examples.

In this revised edition, we have included Web references. This is risky business. We know how quickly things on the Internet change. Almost certainly some of these links will be “dead” by the time you read this book. At the time of publication, we checked and double-checked all the web references to ensure the validity of the links. If you find a Web reference that is no longer applicable, please e-mail me at SarahEaton@eatonintl.com. We’ll make sure we update it.

Introduction

How to use this book

Although many language programs use the services of recruitment agents, we have designed this book around you and your staff. Our objective is to give you ideas and strategies that empower your overall marketing efforts.



The need to market and promote programs in order to keep enrollment flowing is a challenge that does not – and will not – go away.

The underlying philosophy is that schools must take an active role in program promotion themselves. Some language schools are all-too-eager to hand all marketing over to agents and relieve themselves of any responsibility for success or failure of the school. Then if enrollments don't go up, it's easy to say, "Well, obviously we have a bad agent."

Although there are some excellent and some equally terrible agents out there, by allowing your school's success to rest in the hands of an outsider, you're risking a lot. The fact is, schools need to be accountable for their own marketing and promotion. This can include effectively managing your relationships with agents, but it's more than that. It's about moving forward strategically, methodically and persistently to cultivate a market presence, increase your enrollment and build your reputation in what is already a highly competitive marketplace.

Promoting and marketing take time. When people ask me how long it will take before they see results from their marketing efforts, I am hesitant to answer. For some, results come very quickly as inquiries and registrations increase almost instantly. But this isn't generally the case. I heard of one program where the manager assigned a staff member to market the school and expected to see quantitative results after two to three weeks of intensive marketing activity. This was unfair to the person charged with the responsibility of marketing the school and an unrealistic demand on the part of the managing director.

Realistically, I believe that if you move forward strategically and thoughtfully, you may begin to notice some preliminary results in three to six months. But to establish a program's reputation can take years. Your results depend a lot on you. The important thing to remember is that marketing and promoting are ongoing activities that you'll never stop doing as long as you have a program. Successful businesses build marketing activities into their work week. Schools tend not to do this, but rather, they operate on a model that is sporadic, last minute and reactive, rather than pro-active. What I encourage program managers to do is think in a strategic way about marketing. Be pro-active about marketing your school and remember that your efforts need to be consistent and, most of all, enduring. If you don't see results within a few weeks, or even within a few months, don't be discouraged. Remember that this is a long-term business activity that should be included in the strategic plan of the school. If that happens, you will most certainly notice results.

I encourage you to have regular meetings dedicated to marketing your school. Brainstorm ideas; figure out what works for you; try different tactics and monitor the results over the long term.

One way to use the ideas presented in this book is to choose a few ideas that you feel would be effective for your program. Make a note of the person or people responsible for putting the idea into action and a date by which you will follow up to see how the idea was implemented and what effect it has had on your program. For example, if you like the idea of gathering testimonials from students to use in your marketing materials (Idea # 84: Let your students market for you -- Collect testimonials from students and get their permission to use them.) then make a note that says, “Jane to gather 20 testimonials by October 31.” Then, follow up with Jane in early November to see how she has progressed. After she has gathered the testimonials, the next step is to integrate them into your brochures and website. The final result is, your marketing materials have a ring of authenticity about them that will attract more students. More importantly, you will also build accountability into your processes, thus positioning yourself for success.

Finally, as you read through these ideas, imagine how they could impact your program. But don't stop there. Put them to work. A speaker I heard once said, "Until you put your ideas into action, you're just hallucinating." I encourage you to use this book as a starting point that will lead to action. Your dedicated, strategic action and efforts will lead to results and increased enrollment for your program. And if they don't, send the book back to me and I will refund your money!

Happy marketing!

Sarah Elaine Eaton

Part One of Eight

Put on your thinking cap

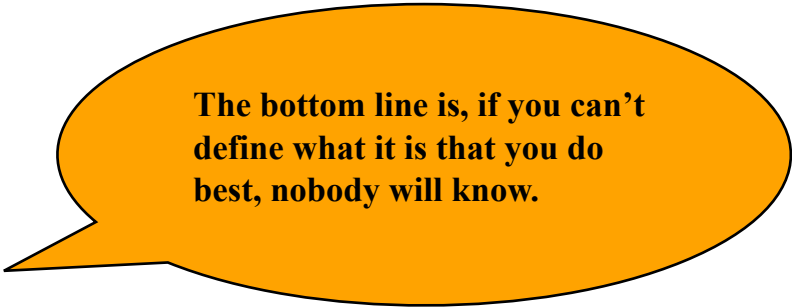
Idea # 1: Define your program before you market it.

Before you begin to market your program, print brochures, create a web page, etc. you need to be clear about exactly what it is you are marketing. How many different types of programs does your school offer? Are they evening programs, intensive academic programs, tutorials? I have been surprised how many times I have asked program coordinators and managers about their programs and they can only answer in vague terms. Listen to the difference between these two possible responses:

“Oh we do a bit of everything...”

or

“We offer part-time programs for teens and adults from the beginner through advanced levels.



The bottom line is, if you can't define what it is that you do best, nobody will know.

In addition, we run a successful workplace learning program, specializing in the manufacturing industry with workers mainly from Asia.”

The person who can give a 10-second definition of his program is more likely to have a clear, directed marketing approach that will fill seats and increase enrollment.

Some people would call this a mission statement. That’s another way of thinking about it, but the idea of developing a mission statement can be overwhelming to some people, so I like to keep things simple and clear.

The bottom line is, if you can’t define what it is that you do best, nobody will know. Take a few minutes to write down the most important points about your program and courses. Then check with others at the school to see if they would agree. Your objective is to come up with a short, concise definition of your overall program.

Idea # 2: Create an image for your program.

Think about what you want your prospective students to imagine when they see your marketing materials.

Is your program based on strict academics, intense cultural immersion, workplace learning or a fun holiday program? Once you have determined what image you want for your program, you can proceed to create that image through the photos, fonts and layouts that you choose for your marketing materials. For example, a fun holiday program does not need a coat of arms on its letterhead, but a program based on serious academic study may benefit from a more traditional image. What is the image you want to create?

The creation of a program or school image is one that you may want to develop through a committee. The input from various committee members can help you clarify what message you want to send out to the world and what you want to avoid. Your committee can include a variety of perspectives such as administration, teaching staff, even students and

alumni. Having someone with some training in branding or marketing may be helpful, too.

Remember that it is easier to create an image from the beginning, than it is to change an image that has already been established. Your aim is to create a strong image for your program so that when prospects and competitors see your marketing material they quickly associate it with your program.



Ask yourself:

**What message do you want others
to get about your program?**

Idea # 3: Set reasonable goals.

If there were currently 10 students registered in your program, it would be unlikely that you could raise that to 1000 students in one year. Generally, the smaller your program, the more capacity for growth you have. It would not be unreasonable to expect a 100% increase in enrollment in one year if your program had only 10 students. However, if you are already at 200+ students per year, you will need to set a realistic goal for growth through your marketing program. Generally a 10% to 20% growth rate is an attainable goal. That would mean, if you currently had 200 students, you could set your goal to 220 or 240 students and you could very well reach that by following some of the suggestions in this book.

For the first year, set modest goals for your marketing program. Let your entire administrative team and teaching staff know what the program's goals are. An example might be, "Did you know that last year we had 200 students enrolled in our program? It is our goal to increase that number by 20% this year. We're going for a total enrollment of 240 students and two extra classes. Ask us how you can help!"

If you do not know how many students you had enrolled in your courses over the past year, now is the time to find out. This is the kind of information you want at your fingertips so that when you are conversing with colleagues and business associates, you can mention both your current enrollment and your plans to increase it. By doing so, you will not be giving away too much information, but rather you will look like a strong leader with a sense of vision and purpose.

Imagine saying to your colleague, “Last year, we had 150 students. Our strategic marketing plan includes a 10% growth rate. We are expecting to reach 165 students enrolled before the end of the year.” Doesn’t that sound good? Well, that could be you talking in your next business encounter, providing you have your figures straight.

The idea is to spread the word about what your marketing goals are so that everybody can help your school reach its potential for that year. By keeping your goals reasonable, your staff, instructors and others around you will be motivated to help you reach them.

Idea # 4: Identify your target market.

Who do you want to register in your program? For example, if your program caters to students 18 years of age or older and who have completed high school, then that is your target market. You need to appeal both to them and possibly their parents, depending on who is footing the bill.



If your programs are filled with workers sponsored through workplace learning programs, your target market may not be the students themselves, but the companies who sponsor them.

When it comes to marketing materials, rarely does one size (or shape or color or format) fit all. For example, if you have a program designed for seniors, it is unlikely that your web marketing will be the most effective tool for them, unless they are a particularly techno-savvy group of elders. A good, old-fashioned brochure printed on good quality paper, placed in libraries and seniors' centres may be an excellent marketing tool for that

group. But for students and young professionals, web marketing is essential.

Also, you may want to consider the language you are using for different groups. A group of high-achieving professionals may be more interested in the end-result of registering in the program, so using words like “results”, “benefits” and “achievement” may be appropriate. On the other hand, students looking for a holiday tour with a language study component may be more interested in the “experience”, the “immersion” and the “fun”.

Once you identify your market, you can tailor your marketing materials to that target group and watch the registrations roll in.

Idea # 5: Carve yourself a niche – offer language courses for specific purposes.

In 1982 W.P. Kinsella wrote *Shoeless Joe*, a novel that was later turned into a major Hollywood movie starring Kevin Costner. The most famous line of the book is: “If you build it, he will come.” The basic premise behind the book is that if you have an idea or a dream, go ahead and build it. The rest will take care of itself.

While this feel-good book, and the movie it was made into, may smack of naïveté on some level, the main principle is one that we can use in marketing our schools. If you build a specialized program, based on a sound curriculum that you can deliver well, the students will come.

Is there something that your school does better than any other in your area? Do you have a program to train foreign language teachers? Do you offer a specialized course in medical or veterinary terminology, for example? How about a course in business communications? If you have at least one course or program that differentiates you from other schools, you can focus on being the best there is for that specialty. You can still keep basic language

training or other programs, but having a specialized niche will ensure you a unique market share and add both revenue and students to your program.

These courses also deserve special attention in your marketing plan. For example, if you offer a program for language teachers from foreign countries, you could easily research the contact information for language schools abroad and add that information to your database. Then you have the tools to do a targeted direct mailing campaign to those schools that would catch the attention of those teachers and school administrators.

Generally, it takes longer to see results for specialized programs. That is because it may take prospects longer to find out about your niche and respond to your marketing. I've seen more than one niche program fail because administrators gave up on it too early. One semester or session is not enough to test the market to determine if there is a demand for your specialized course. These types of program may require extra attention in their infancy, simply because their target market is very specific.

You may want to dedicate a certain amount of time (for example, one hour a week for an entire year) just to marketing this particular program. This

may mean contacting associations, schools or other audiences with an interest in your niche to advise them of your program. For example, if you have a program to train teachers, then a direct mailing to teachers' associations abroad may help you promote these courses. It may cost you time to build your mailing list for such a direct mail out or it may cost you money to buy such a list. You won't see a return on your investment until participants begin to enroll.

If you persist, within a couple of years, you can have a booming program. The trick is to carve yourself a niche and be patient while the world discovers your uniqueness. If you build it... they will come.

Idea # 6: Be honest about how much you are willing and able to invest in marketing.

One of the major pitfalls of marketing plans for language programs is that directors and coordinators are given little or no budget to work with. Time and time again I have heard, “We have no money for marketing!” The reality is, you are going to need to spend money marketing your program or you won’t have a program for very long.

Being brutally honest about how much of your resources you can allocate to marketing will help you target your dollars in the most effective way. The first step however, is sitting down with a calculator and figuring out exactly how much you have to work with.

There are varying theories about how much an organization should spend on marketing to be effective. It is important for you to decide, together with your staff and school administrators or owners, how much you are willing to invest in it. Bringing all the players to the table may be a difficult task in itself, but if you are serious about marketing your program, you need to be serious about how much you really have to work with to get the job done.

One place to start may be to look at your gross income for last year and use 10 - 20% of that for marketing. This may seem like a lot, but if you can grow your program another 10-20% (a conservative estimate) you will have made your money back.

Idea 7: Price your program powerfully.

Figuring out how to price a program can be tricky. It can be even trickier to adjust the price of a program that has already been established. If your price is too high, prospects may balk. If your price is too low, they may think that it is poor quality. It doesn't pay to offer bargain basement prices if you pride yourself on quality.

Before you price your program, you will need to determine your costs. Your cost for a program will include obvious things such as:

- ☼ instructors' salaries
- ☼ learning materials (books, CDs, etc.)
- ☼ excursions (including any lunches or entrance fees to museums, etc.)
- ☼ accommodation (homestay, dorm or hotel)
- ☼ insurance
- ☼ photocopies
- ☼ catering

And there are the not-so-obvious costs included in your overhead that you will want to factor in as well. These may include:

- ☼ support staff salaries
- ☼ office supplies (including stationery and business cards)
- ☼ marketing materials
- ☼ printing
- ☼ postage
- ☼ rent (including any special events you may host, such as a graduation)
- ☼ phone and fax expenses
- ☼ electricity
- ☼ gas
- ☼ computing and technology expenses (including language lab maintenance and tech support)

Once you have determined your own cost, you will know what your break-even point is. From there, you can determine how you will price your program. Because hidden and unexpected costs inevitably occur during any program, I generally recommend at least doubling your costs in order to achieve a figure that is a reasonable price for students. For specialized or custom-designed programs, you may be able to triple or quadruple your cost and use that as your price point.

Sound too high? I have found that as educators, we tend to be conservative when it comes to be cost-conscious and reluctant to price ourselves out of the market. Remember that if your price is too low, prospects may not take you seriously. And you can always subsidize some programs if others are doing very well. It's about finding a balance that will work for your school.

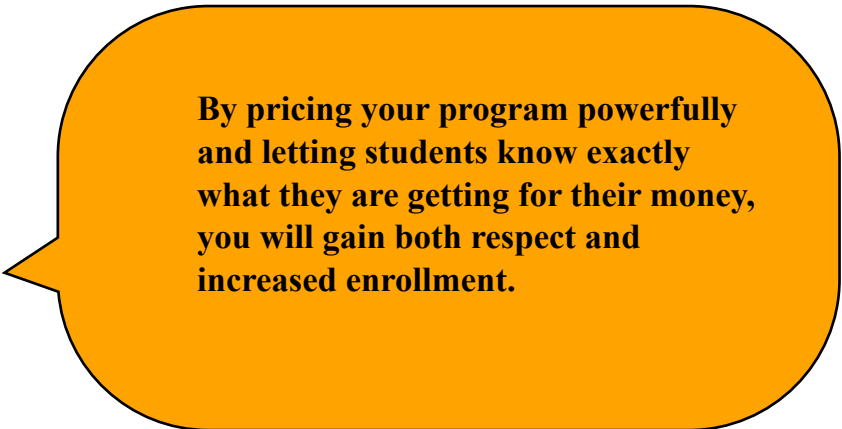
I strongly recommend that you tell your prospects exactly what they are getting for their money, they are more likely to understand what they are paying for and they will be more likely to buy.

What do you include in your pricing? Books? Homestay? Excursions? Make sure that you list on your marketing materials what is included in the price. Some schools charge extra for students to take exams, so if your school doesn't, be sure to list that.

Here's an example of what you could write:

Our price includes:

- ☼ 25 hours of instruction per week
- ☼ books and learning materials
- ☼ CD ROM of practice activities
- ☼ homestay (including 3 meals per day)
- ☼ medical and accident insurance
- ☼ all tests and exams
- ☼ graduation ceremony
- ☼ certificate of completion
- ☼ final written evaluation of your performance



**By pricing your program powerfully
and letting students know exactly
what they are getting for their money,
you will gain both respect and
increased enrollment.**

Resource List

I encourage you to continue to build your knowledge about marketing. Here are some books I hope you find useful.

Bender, Peter Urs and George Torok. *Secrets of Power Marketing*. Toronto. Stoddart Publishing Co. Ltd. 1999.

Debelak, Don. *Marketing Magic: Innovative and Proven Ideas for Finding Customers, Making Sales, and Growing your Business*. An Adams Business Advisor. Holbrook, MA, Bob Adams Inc. 1994.

Grede, Robert. *Naked Marketing: The Bare Essentials*. Paramus, NJ. Prentice Hall. 1997.

Levinson, Jay Conrad and Charles Rubin. *Guerilla Marketing Handbook*. New York. Houghton Mifflin Co. 1994.

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Wiersema, Fred. *The New Market Leaders: Who's Winning and How in the Battle for Customers*. New York. The Free Press. 2001.

Withers, Jean and Carol Vipperman. *Marketing your Service*. 3rd edition. Self-Counsel Business Series. North Vancouver. Self-Counsel Press Ltd. 1988

About the Author

Sarah Elaine Eaton holds a PhD in Educational Leadership. A Research Associate at the University of Calgary's Language Research Centre, Dr. Sarah is regarded as a world expert in marketing of language programs.



An experienced public speaker and member of the Canadian Association of Professional Speakers (CAPS), Eaton has presented her work in seven different countries (Canada, the United States, Mexico, Honduras, Cuba, Spain and England). These presentations take the form of keynotes, scholarly research dissemination, webinars and interactive workshops.

The print version of this book is available through her website and on Amazon.com.

www.eatonintl.com

www.drsaraheaton.wordpress.com

Empower Others to Market Language Programs More Powerfully

I'm passionate about languages and promoting them. I hope this ebook empowers program directors and re-invigorates teachers.

If you liked this ebook, here's how you can help:

- ☼ Forward the e-book on. E-mail it. Post it on your blog or website. Print it. Just don't charge for it or change it, please.
- ☼ Forward the YouTube video [101 Ways to Market Your Language Program](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KDyNOsZQPX8) (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KDyNOsZQPX8>)
- ☼ Share your thoughts about this ebook on Facebook, Twitter, your blog and other social media.
- ☼ Purchase a copy of the full book for your library. It's available from my website (<http://www.eatonintl.com>) or from [Amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com).
- ☼ Invite me to join your conversations in plenary sessions and through keynote presentations at your conferences and events. I'll gladly come and speak about this topic that I'm deeply passionate about.

What others have said about *101 Ways to Market Your Language Program*

“Every language school should have a copy of *101 Ways to Market Your Language Program*. It is an easy to use reference tool that is full of useful marketing ideas.”

Ron Horton, President,
Canadian English Academy

“... Reading this book is a must for all Canadian language program administrators.”

Judy Hasinoff, Program Administrator
Lethbridge Community College, Lethbridge, Canada

“Ideas are easily identified and can be implemented one by one... This is what we are all looking for – practical help to boost our language programs.”

Erva Sherwood, Manager
Maple Leaf Academy, Calgary, Canada

“This is a really refreshing, easy book to read! It serves as a purposeful reminder to those with marketing experience, as well as a ‘handbook’ for those new to marketing. I keep it handy to remind myself of ideas I may have forgotten. (And I mean... right on my desk!)”

Barbara Suderman, Instructor / Marketing consultant
Maple Leaf Academy, Calgary, Canada

“It is full of helpful ideas, many of which can easily be implemented in Germany too.... Your book really fills a gap here. I do not know of any similar publication in Germany.”

Prof. Dr. W. Brand
Universitat Hamburg, Hamburg, Germany

“I had confidence in this author as soon as I read the introduction. Sarah recognizes the realities faced by many language programs. The ideas are straightforward and usable in the situations we operate in. There are 101 practical ideas to try. Everyone will be able to find ideas that will promote the health and growth of their language programs.

This is a great book of ideas. The ideas are organized so that it is easy for readers to pick and choose what is applicable and practical for their particular programs.

This book is written so that you can pick it up and find something new to try. It is also a great book to share with the teaching staff as it stimulates creative thinking.”

Dianne Desrosiers, Language Coordinator
Grande Prairie Regional College, Alberta, Canada